



Newsletter

Volume 5, January 2003

The editor invites submissions of items relevant to Clare studies, including calls for papers, announcements of recent publications, details of upcoming events, and scholarly notes. Send submissions to Sarah Zimmerman, Dept. of English, Fordham University, 113 W. 60th St., New York, NY 10023; or: <zimmerman@fordham.edu>. The editor would like to thank all of the contributors to this issue.

Publication of *John Clare: Poems of the Middle Period, 1822-1837*, Vol. V

Edited by Eric Robinson, David Powell, and P.M.S. Dawson

Praise for a previous volume: "This ongoing Clarendon edition of Clare's poetry...will come to be seen as one of the greatest editions of the twentieth century."—*Notes and Queries*

Completing the influential Oxford edition of Clare's poetry, this volume presents the poems of the Northborough period of Clare's creativity. As with other volumes in the edition, many of the poems have never before been published, and Clare's spelling, punctuation, grammar, and vocabulary have all been carefully preserved. This final volume also includes corrections to the texts, variants, and notes in previously-published volumes in the series, along with a cumulative glossary and cumulative indices of first-lines and titles.

(Oxford English Texts) April 2003 752 pp.
ISBN 0198123868 \$150.00 (\$120.00 with John Clare Conference discount)

Volumes in the series will be discounted 20% at the John Clare Conference in Elkridge, Maryland, March 21-22, 2003.

2002 MLA Panel

This year's panel on Clare was organized by Scott McEathron and chaired by Misty Beck. It was very well attended, and the papers prompted a sustained and lively discussion with the audience. Tim Burke began, with a paper that focused on what he learned in editing his volume (1780-1800) in *Nineteenth Century English Labouring-Class Poets* (Pickering & Chatto, 2002). He found, first, that Clare was far more connected to the tradition of laboring poets than has yet been adequately recognized. Burke argued, second, for abandoning the notion of the Romantic solitary, in favor of an understanding of "friendship not as an abstract ethic, but as lived experience." His third point was that we should pay more attention to periodical culture (noting that Clare was atypical in not participating in it more). Finally, Burke noted the striking diversity of the tradition of laboring poets, which extended beyond England to Jamaica, Ireland, and America (via Scottish immigrants).

Timothy Eugene Ziegenhagen approached Clare's poetry from the perspective of Romantic science. Drawing on James McKusick's work, he argued that the sense of movement was central to Clare's "green" poetics, because the poet wanted to convey a sense of natural process in his poetry. In a reading of "Emmonsails Heath in Winter," Ziegenhagen demonstrated how the poem conveys a visceral sense of a stable heathlands ecosystem (as differentiated from the marshlands ecosystem depicted in "The Lament of Swordy Well"). Arguing his thesis across a range of Clare's poetry, including "Remembrances" and "The Flitting," he concluded that Clare writes against the disruption of "healthy, vibrant ecosystems," particularly by enclosure, which diminishes plant diversity.

Kevin Binfield contended that "the Luddites were neither—or both—urban and rural. He argued that the "leisure class aesthetics" that allowed Felicia Hemans and Anna Letitia Barbauld into the canon excluded a Luddite "working-class poetics wrought on its own terms." Describing it as a "local poetics," Binfield observed that "within their local contexts, Luddite poems performed specific functions." Although they often published anonymously, these poets understood themselves to be participating in a tradition. Their generic models were provided by hymns and ballads; other popular forms were "exhortations" (or invitations to further action) and "congratulations" (for past successes). In terms of temporality, Luddite poems often invoke a local past, but are general "future oriented." Finally, he suggested that the "logic" of this poetics is "customary and com-munitarian."

John Clare Conference 2003

by James McKusick

Preparations are well underway for the John Clare Conference 2003, the first annual conference organized by the John Clare Society of North America. This international scholarly conference will meet at the Belmont Conference Center in Elkridge, Maryland on March 21-22, 2003. The conference will showcase a fascinating variety of critical approaches to the study of John Clare. Several distinguished scholars from Britain and America will present their work at the conference, including Joanna Ball, Paul Chirico, Richard Gillin, Nathaniel Goldsmith, Gary Harrison, Bridget Keegan, Sara Lodge, Scott McEathron, Eric Robinson, David Simpson, Michael Suarez, Alan Vardy, and Sarah Zimmerman. The conference will investigate new directions in Clare scholarship and celebrate the completion of the Oxford English Text edition of John Clare's poetry, edited by Eric Robinson, David Powell, and Paul Dawson.

The conference program has been organized around the central theme of Clare's poetic career, taking into account important new information about Clare's life, his reading, and his engagement with poetic tradition. The conference will include a session on "John Clare and the Natural World" and it will conclude with a round-table discussion of "New Directions in Clare Studies." Along the way, there will be ample opportunity for informal discussion and exchange of ideas, and we will certainly enjoy our stay at the Belmont Conference Center, located on the grounds of an elegant eighteenth-century estate. Participants will find 80 acres of rolling meadows, with

fully staffed services, a gourmet chef, tennis courts, and hiking trails.

On the evening of Friday, March 21, we have arranged a festive poetry reading and musical performance. The internationally renowned poet Galway Kinnell will present a reading of some favorite John Clare poems, followed by a musical rendition of John Clare's folk songs performed by Tim White and Victoria Robinson. The conference will feature an exhibition of original prints and watercolors by Barbara Weber, entitled "John Clare and His Poetry, Muse for the Artist." In addition, there will be a book exhibition table staffed by Maura Smyth, a student at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County who has kindly volunteered to assist in various conference matters. The book table will exhibit display copies (and discount order forms) for *John Clare: Poems of the Middle Period, 1822-1837*. Many other excellent books by and about John Clare will be on display.

The conference is open to both members and non-members of the John Clare Society of North America, and we welcome the participation of scholars, graduate students, and others interested in the poetry of John Clare. It is not too late to register for the conference (and there are still a few rooms available at the Belmont Conference Center), so please consider becoming a participant! Further information about the John Clare Conference, including maps, directions, and registration forms, is available at the following website: <www.johnclare.org>. If you have any questions, please contact the Conference Director, James McKusick: <mckusick@umbc.edu>.

*English Labouring-Class Poets,
1700-1800 Published*

by Bridget Keegan

After three years of working on the project, I am happy to report that the first of two three-volume series of *English Labouring-Class Poets* has been published early this year by Pickering and Chatto. This collection represents the first modern republication of many of the countless poets from laboring-class backgrounds who wrote and published during the eighteenth-century. While Clare explicitly mentions only a handful of his laboring-class forebears (such as Robert Burns or Robert Bloomfield), our collaborative research for the collection has recovered over 1000 poets of laboring-class origins writing between 1700 and 1900. Like Clare, these poets were deeply aware of the refined poetic tradition that they often aspired to emulate. However, like Clare as well, many of these poets were deeply aware of other authors like them, and frequently wrote to and about fellow laboring-class poets. For instance, while former bricklayer Henry Jones wrote parodies of Edward Young and the mid-eighteenth-century "graveyard school," Jones himself was the victim of parody at the hands of fellow Irishman and shoemaker James Eyre Weekes. Numerous poets, such as Mary Leapor wrote homages in praise of Alexander Pope, but William Vernon, who was a soldier as well as a poet, wrote homages to carpenter poet William Brimble. All of these works are included in the present volumes.

While it would be impossible to produce a collection representing the entirety of the laboring-class poetic tradition to which Clare belongs, these editions aim to provide a good introduction to the more

well-known and interesting of the extensive legacy of laboring writers. Each of the volumes works to demonstrate the range of forms in which laboring-class poets wrote and the wide variety of issues taken up by their poems—from versifications of scripture such as those found in Susannah Harrison's *Songs in the Night* to James Woodhouse's epic autobiography (a kind of laboring-class *Prelude*), the 60,000 line *Life and Lucubrations of Crispinus Scriblerus*. More familiar poets, such as Stephen Duck, Mary Leapor, and Ann Yearsley are included, but we made a special effort to include poets who may have thus far escaped even the most liberal of recent revisionist anthologies, such as journeyman woolcomber poet, Christopher Jones or Scottish sailor William Falconer's *The Shipwreck* (1762), which was one of the best-selling and most popular poems of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

While selections from slightly over sixty poets have been included in the present three volumes, John Goodridge has compiled a larger bibliographic database listing entries for all the laboring-class poets the editorial group has examined. That database, which we hope will provide a useful resource for Clare scholars and indeed for all scholars of labouring-class culture, is available at: www.human.ntu.ac.uk/clare/elsie.htm

The first series collection covers the period between 1700 and 1800, and thus includes some of Clare's more significant forebears, such as Thomas Chatterton. The first volume, edited by William Christmas of San Francisco State University covers poets writing from 1700-1740; the second, which I edited, covers 1740-1780; and the third, edited by Tim Burke of St. Mary's University College in England, covers 1780-1800. John Goodridge served as General Editor,

Simon Kövesi as Assistant General Editor, and David Fairer as Consulting Editor. The second series, devoted to nineteenth-century laboring class poets and due out at this time next year, will have individual volumes edited by Scott McEathron, Kaye Kossick, and John Goodridge. Ordering information is available at Pickering and Chatto's website, www.pickeringchatto.com

Playing a Hunch, or the Value of Dead Ends

by Alan Vardy

In the summer of 2001 I was just finishing a week's reading in the Clare letters at the British Library and planning a trip to Nottingham to give a talk on Clare's politics to the Nottingham-Trent Clare seminar. I had been much occupied with political references in letters to Clare between 1828 and 1831, and as I was going to Nottingham anyway, so I decided to play a hunch in pursuit of the Holy Grail of Clare's political writing, the undiscovered published version of 'Apology for the Poor.' My hypothesis ran that, given that I had exhausted efforts to locate a copy of John Drakard's *Champion* for the most likely dates of publication in 1829-31, perhaps there was another available source for the essay as a reprint in some other radical journal published during the same months. I conjectured that the most likely newspaper was James Montgomery's *Sheffield Iris*.

Montgomery was my first choice for several compelling reasons. He had a publishing and personal history with Clare, having published several of Clare's poems and several poems by the 'Old Poets' penned by Clare. Montgomery had detected Clare's playful 'fathering' of the

poems, and the two exchanged letters about the nature of authorship and the renewed taste for a poetics of sociability represented by early 17th century poets. Furthermore, Clare had great respect for Montgomery as a public intellectual, reformer and poet. The depth of personal connection, and a shared commitment to the social views expressed in 'Apology for the Poor,' made the *Iris* a likely outlet for Clare. At least I conjectured as much.

I entertained the objections that the MS versions of 'Apology for the Poor' suggest that it may have been published anonymously thus making it uncertain Montgomery would have connected it to Clare, if indeed he read the *Champion* to begin with. These objections were answered by another Clare/Montgomery connection that confirmed the viability of the project in my own mind. Montgomery's *Iris* bore the same relationship to the Earl Fitzwilliam, and radical Whig politics, in south Yorkshire as Drakard's *Champion* did in Northamptonshire and Lincolnshire. Wentworth Woodhouse, the great northern Fitzwilliam estate influenced local politics, just as Milton House served as the center of progressive parliamentary politics in Clare's neighbourhood. Having just read Joseph Henderson's (the Milton House head gardener's) letters to Clare from 1824 through 1831, I knew that the Fitzwilliam estates were in close and constant communication, and newspapers, magazines and books circulated amongst the members of the Fitzwilliam circle, including Clare. Henderson and Clare corresponded on social issues in addition to their ongoing natural history collaborations, and Henderson had taken on the role of editorial advisor for works like 'The Parish' that were deemed too politically trenchant for Taylor & Hessey. Given this activity, it seemed likely that publication of 'Apology for the Poor' in the *Champion* would come to the attention of

Montgomery in Sheffield, and furthermore that Earl Fitzwilliam and Lord Milton may have advocated republication as a means of disseminating Clare's views.

The gaps in the collection of *Sheffield Iris* at the Colindale newspaper archive of the British Library corresponded with those of the *Champion*, and thus got me no closer. A trip to Sheffield (after the Nottingham talk) proved frustrating. There were microfilm copies of the *Iris* at the Sheffield Library, bound originals in the University of Sheffield archives, and at the Sheffield City archive, but none of them were complete and they did not complement each other. In short, the problem of the missing issues of the *Champion* simply recurred in the incomplete available runs of the *Iris*. Given the larger circulation of the Sheffield paper and scholarly interest in Montgomery it may be that the missing issues from 1828-31 survive, but I could not find them.

Despite the dead-end, the rationale for such an approach in looking for Clare's 'Apology' seems valid. The issues from the period in question confirmed most of the terms of my original hypothesis. I read a Clare poem, a reprint from Drakard's *Champion* and one from his *Stamford News*, confirming my hunch that like-minded newspaper editors routinely reprinted one another's copy. The real reward of my 'failure,' however, was the chance to read Montgomery. The first issue I read, 4 August 1829, contained a full-page encomium to Earl Fitzwilliam detailing his political career and liberal views. Montgomery proved to be a fascinating polymath, moving from detailed accounts of the exotic pagan practices of India to scathing attacks on tyranny in all its forms. He published crime stories that demonstrated the proposition that criminality was the

inevitable result of tyranny and poverty—a bailiff murdered by tenants as he attempted to evict them. He also reported Cobbett's campaign for reform, reprinted all his speeches, and published the text of a petition put to parliament on behalf of unemployed weavers (with the King's glib response printed below).

So, even though I failed in the quest for the treasured document, I recovered a strong sense of the political context in which Clare's essay appeared. It was a time made present in an article titled "National Distress" reprinted from *The Morning Journal* by Montgomery on 28 July 1829: "The curse of the degraded peasant floats upon the night breeze. Discontent is as redundant as the rain. Poaching is not now deemed a crime. Stealing is a mere diversion of manual labour. The peasant *is* a slave." These were the inevitable fruits of the "detestable parish economy" according to Montgomery, a view seconded by Clare in his 'Apology,' regardless of when, where, or even if he published.

UK Clare Report for 2002

by John Goodridge

I have fewer activities to report to you this year, since the Clare Society's year has been dominated by a defensive campaign: the Society has been fighting a proposal to develop houses on 'Clare's Meadow' in Helpston. I wrote something about this last year. It is the area to the rear of Clare's cottage, an ancient 'close' of the utmost importance not only to Clare's heritage, but to the quality and character of the village as a whole. This kind of campaign takes a lot of organization, as well as vigilance and determination, and one is never quite sure if the danger has

gone for good, since the developers often re-submit the proposal in a different form (as has happened once here), or pass the land and proposal to another developer who starts the whole thing over again (which may yet occur in this instance). Everyone knows that we need new housing, but one wishes the developers would concentrate on reusing the 'brown land' sites that the government has prioritized. With a lot of sterling work from Peter Moyse, Rodney Lines, and the forty or more others who wrote letters to the planning authority, the danger seems to have passed for the time being.

Much of my own time this year has been taken up with the 'English Labouring Class Poets' project, which has some relevance to Clare. Two three volume series of texts will cover the period 1700-1900. (The first of these, covering the eighteenth century, has just been published by Pickering & Chatto.) As the project's general editor I have also been building a database of labouring-class poets for this period, and I was fairly amazed to realize, once I had compiled the information the six editors had pooled, that we had over a thousand names in it. These are published labouring-class poets from the period 1700-1900, so it seems that Clare stands as a central figure in a far more extensive tradition of self-educated, labouring-class poets than anyone had suspected. I'm continuing to develop this database, and we have put a prototype version on the web at <http://human.ntu.ac.uk/clare/elsie.htm>.

One important result of all this activity is that my university, Nottingham Trent, has recently appointed David Worrall as our new Professor of Labouring-Class Writing. The category is a world first as far as I am aware, and perhaps says something about how far the study of Clare and his tradition has now come.

The major Clare event of the year was the three-day Festival at Helpston in July. The Midsummer Cushion ceremony took place on the Friday as usual, and the Saturday offered village walks and talks, culminating in a special recital of Clare songs in St Botolph's Church. Trying to fit every-thing into a single day has given the organizers headaches in the past, and the 'coach trip' event has been a casualty of time pressure in recent years. A three-day event meant we could restore this popular item, and the Sunday was spent exploring two Clare locations. In the morning we walked around Clare's Stamford. There is so much of interest there that I am surprised there's no official 'Clare Trail'. Clare locations include the 'Hole in the Wall' pub where Clare did his late-night drinking when he worked at Burghley, Drury's bookshop where he bought Thomson's *Seasons* and later, embarrassingly, failed to recognize his patron the Marquis of Exeter, Drakard's bookshop, the home of Dr Arnold who treated Clare, and the home and shop of Clare's patron and friend Octavius Gilchrist. This was matched by an afternoon coach trip around Clare's Rutland. Famously the smallest county in England (its Latin motto *Multum in parvo* means 'Much in little'), it was where Clare went lime-burning in his youth, and its scenery influenced some of the early verses he wrote there. The lime-kiln at Pickworth where he worked is now restored and rebuilt, and other highlights of the trip were a visit to the former Bluebell pub at Pickworth where Clare stayed as a lime-burner, and the church of St Peter and St Paul at Great Casterton, where he and Patty Turner were married in 1820, and the Crown pub across the road where they held the wedding breakfast.

A week after the Clare Festival Ronald Blythe presented a programme of Clare readings at the Stratford-on-Avon Poetry

Festival, with the RSC actors Estelle Kohler and Michael Pennington doing the readings. Our autumn event was a month-long exhibition in October and November of Carry Akroyd's wonderful Clare paintings and prints at Loughton Central Library, Essex, accompanied by a series of talks, events, and a walk in Clare's Epping Forest. Carry's Clare images may be seen on her web site <www.carryakroyd.co.uk>. The Clare Forum again hosted the Bloomfield Society's AGM in November, when Tim Burke gave a most interesting paper on Bloomfield and friendship.

To conclude, I have a naming story. I am aware of five Clare 'namings' in the past—that is, places or buildings named after John Clare. In Peterborough there is a Clare car park (not a very ecologically appropriate thing to name after him, perhaps), a John Clare theatre (a bit better), and a John Clare pub, which was so named after a competition to find the best name (the winner with 'John Clare' was the late George Dixon). I believe there was also a 'secure unit' named after Clare at Glinton—at least there was a local press story about this a few years ago. If so, it would reflect the high regard for John Clare felt by the mental health community. There is a Clare Hall at the University of Leicester, reflecting John Tibble's distinguished tenure there. And now Clare has a lecture theatre named after him, too.

I noticed last summer that our new lecture theatre complex on the Clifton Campus at Nottingham Trent University had simply been signposted as 'New Lecture Theatre'. I didn't think this was much of a name, so I asked the managers at Trent what they thought of calling it 'The John Clare Lecture Theatre'. They were very enthusiastic, and all three faculties that use the building readily and swiftly agreed to this. So now it is the

John Clare Lecture Theatre, and to celebrate this the Clare Society has generously offered to mount Tom Bates's new marble and copper plaque of Clare in the lecture theatre. This will be a memorable and lasting memorial to the poet, and will be seen by generations of young people (and older people too) coming into higher education for the first time.

There's a certain poetic symmetry to the building's positioning, too, though you'd have to come to Nottingham to appreciate this properly. Behind the lecture theatre looms the new Ada Byron King building (named after the computer pioneer, and home to the Faculty of Education). A few yards further away, the Faculty of Science is housed in the Erasmus Darwin building. And opposite the lecture theatre are the more comfortable lines of the old George Eliot building. These are all named after Midlands worthies, of course, and the placing is just coincidental, but it somehow seems apt that Clare should be so neatly placed between Byron's daughter, his versifying botanical predecessor, and the author of 'Scenes of Clerical Life' (whose *Middlemarch* was filmed for the BBC in Clare's Stamford).

Information about Affiliated Societies — from their websites

by Bridget Keegan

THOMAS CHATTERTON SOCIETY

The Membership Secretary is Richard Fenlon:
<ristardof@ofionnalain.worldonline.co.uk>

The North American Membership Secretary is Bridget Keegan:

<bmkeegan@creighton.edu>

The Thomas Chatterton Society has been founded in 2002 (the 250th anniversary of Chatterton's birth), to celebrate the life and works of this remarkable poet, and to broaden and deepen awareness of Chatterton and his world.

The Society brings together all those who are interested in Chatterton's writing and his extraordinary life-story, and hopes to stimulate interest amongst those who are new to Chatterton.

It aims to increase awareness of Chatterton's important contributions to the cultural history of Bristol and the development of Romanticism.

It supports scholarship and research into Chatterton and his writings, and the conservation of areas associated with Chatterton.

It also aims to highlight the needs of gifted teenagers like Chatterton in modern society.

It organizes meetings and events in Bristol and elsewhere, including a regular event on Chatterton's Birthday, 20 November.

Members are kept informed through a regular Newsletter and other publications. Those interested in learning more about the society should contact the membership secretaries or visit the Society's website at:
<human.ntu.ac.uk/clare/tcs.html>.

ROBERT BLOOMFIELD SOCIETY

If you are interested in the work and life of Robert Bloomfield, the most successful of the self-taught 'peasant poets' of the Romantic period, you should know that a flourishing literary society dedicated to

his life exists and welcomes your membership. The Robert Bloomfield Society was formed in 2000, coinciding with the bicentenary anniversary year of the publication of Bloomfield's great work *The Farmer's Boy*, and acts as a focus for information with newsletters, events and its web site. It has already secured a small but committed membership base.

Bloomfield was born in the Suffolk village of Honington in 1766 and died 53 years later at Shefford in Bedfordshire. These two locations are naturally featured in the Society's forthcoming programme of events as well as other places identified with the poet. Additionally the Society organizes an annual informal Bloomfield festival at Nottingham Trent University celebrating aspects of Bloomfield's poetry in the autumn when it holds its AGM and a members' informal reception.

Membership is open to anyone resident in the UK or overseas with a local, family, academic or general literary interest in Bloomfield. Benefits of membership include invitations to the Society's two annual events and a subscription to its newsletter, the only regular periodical (coming out with two or three editions a year) dedicated exclusively to Bloomfield, edited by John Goodridge (also editor of *Selected Poems of Robert Bloomfield*). For more information about membership, contact:

Philip Hoskins MBE, The Old Rectory, Campton, Shefford, Beds, SG17 5PF (e-mail <philiphkns@aol.com>), or:

Dr John Goodridge, Department of English & Media Studies, The Nottingham Trent University, Clifton Lane, Nottingham, NG11 8NS (e-mail <john.goodridge@ntu.ac.uk>).

For North American membership, contact: Dr. William J. Christmas, Department of English, San Francisco State University,

1600 Holloway Ave., San Francisco, CA 94132 (email: <xmas@sfsu.edu>).

The above information is taken from the Bloomfield Society Webpage: <human.ntu.ac.uk/bloomfield/rbs.htm>

GEORGE DIXON (6 June 1917 – 28 November 2001)

by Eric Robinson

. . . a small benefit done to ourselves, or our near friends, excites more lively sentiment of love and approbation than a great benefit done to a distant commonwealth.

—David Hume, *Enquiry concerning the Principles of Morals*, 1777

George Dixon (1917-2001) was a founder-member of the John Clare Society, along with Brian Blade, the-then Rector of St. Botolph's, Helpston, and the poet, Edward Storey, when the society was inaugurated in October 1981 at the Village Hall in Helpston. He was the Society's first Treasurer and Membership Secretary, and for many years corresponded with all the members of the Society and several of Clare's descendants. He could be seen at every annual meeting, along with his wife, Mary, and he contributed an article on 'Clare and Religion' to the first number of the *John Clare Society Journal* in 1982. Eventually he was elected a Life Member and, until his death, always participated in meetings to do with Clare. No member was more important to the success of the Clare Society than George and no one ever had a stronger admiration of the poet. George represented the backbone of the society, those East of Englanders who recognize Clare as their *local* poet. Most of George's interests were rooted in the region of his birth and life—the two Queens, Katharine of Aragon and Mary, Queen of Scots, who were both buried in

Peterborough Cathedral, though Mary was later removed; Old Scarlett, the famous Elizabethan grave-digger of the Cathedral about whom George published a pamphlet; the archaeology of the region, especially the Bronze Age settlement at Fen Gate; and the glories of East Anglian and Northamptonshire architecture and religion. Only his love of stamps and his participation in the Second World War extended his interests to the international scene. Like Clare, he was a man with deep roots in his own place, and he spent his whole life trying to serve his own people and his own local and regional culture.

He was born at the Hurn (a street-name) in Oundle, a market-town halfway between Peterborough and Northampton. His paternal grand-father was Nathan Edward Dixon, a prominent road-surveyor, who, as a member of the Peterborough Museum Society, was one of the donors of Clare manuscripts to the exhibition of 1896. George's father was Nathan Egbert Dixon who moved from Oundle to Peterborough early in George's child-hood and became Chief Goods Clerk at the East Station. George first attended New Fletton Infant School and then Orchard Street Junior School. He must have been a bright boy because he won a scholarship to Fletton Secondary School, but could not be accepted because he was too young. He later won a scholarship to the Deacon School, however, a school where John Tibble, who, with his wife, Anne, edited Clare's poems, became English master. At Deacon School, George matriculated in 1932 and passed his Higher School Certificate in 1934. One of his subjects must have been German because he remained fairly fluent in the language for the rest of his life and went on a walking tour of Germany just before World War II. In 1934, he passed the Clerical Examination for the Civil Service and started work in the Peterborough

Telephone Manager's Office. Just before this, he did a short stint at Baker Perkins, the engineering firm. (American readers may be interested to know that "Perkins" was Jacob Perkins, the American engineer and designer, who revolutionized the production of bank-notes.)

By 1940, George had already become a member of the Peterborough Museum Society since in that year he was assistant to Mr. Dobbs, the society's librarian. Then he was called up for war-service in the Chemical Engineering branch of the Royal Engineers. He rose to the rank of sergeant and landed on Gold Beach during the Normandy invasion. Towards the end of his life, he visited the battlefields on which he had served. He was a true patriot and one of his sons, Murray, has become a professional soldier. After the war he returned to his job and quickly extended his local voluntary service; on the Committee of the Museum Society, then President from 1969-1971, and, in 1999, Honorary Vice President. No one knew the library's contents better than George and he used that knowledge to help many Clare scholars as well as scholars in other disciplines. Once George's memory for the location of books and papers was no longer available, it became an individual exploration to find many things. George was interested in archaeology and was a member of the Peterborough Archeological Society. He did a great deal to promote the development of the internationally-famous Fen Gate Bronze Age site and was a close friend of the Director, Francis Prior. He took an actual hand in several digs at other sites round Maxey, Helpstone and Fletton.

George Dixon was a stalwart Anglican: an early chairman of St. John's Youth Group; a deputy church-warden of St. John's for many years; a sidesman, a member of the Church Council, a member of the Church

of England's Men's Society and a member of both the Deanery and the Diocesan Synods. He was a Committee Member of the Friends of Peterborough Cathedral, a voluntary worker in the Cathedral book shop and a Guide, particularly interested in Old Scarlett, the Elizabethan gravedigger, and in the two Queens, Katharine of Aragon and Mary, Queen of Scots. The latter interest took him often to Fotheringhay, where he loved to take his Sunday luncheon at the Falcon. When my wife and I held our engagement party at the Falcon, George lured away most of our guests to the church to give them a talk on the two queens. George was also a member of PROBUS, an association of Peterborough business and professional people.

Mary (nee Smith) and George were married on 23 September 1950 and had three sons, Graham, Rogan and Murray. Both Mary & George doted upon their grandchildren and he was a great success always with young children. Almost until the end of his life, George Dixon was a vigorous walker, an enthusiastic philatelist, a volunteer-worker, and a true gentleman. Mary and he were also generous hosts, as David Powell and I both learned to our great advantage, while studying the Clare mss. at the museum.

[note: I am most grateful to Mary Dixon for all her help.]